

620
Religious Wisdom the best Treasure.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the Worshipful
Company of Goldsmiths,

A T
St. Mary le Bow,

On Feb. 6. 17¹⁰₁₁. K

By **GEORGE DELL, L. L. B.**
Rector of Foulness in Essex.

Publish'd at the Request of the Stewards, and others
of the Audience.

L O N D O N:

Printed for **WILLIAM INNYS**, at the *Prince's*
Arms in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*, 1711.

Religious History the best Treasures.

A

SERMON

Preached before the Worshipful

Company of Goldsmiths



St Mary le Bow.

On Feb. 6. 1717.

By GEORGE DEANE, LL.B.

Rector of London in 1717.

Printed at the Request of the Students and Masters of the Company.

LONDON.

Printed for W. Lintox, at the Printing Office in St Pauls Church-Yard, 1717.

T O

Mr. *Humphrey Dell*,
Mr. *John Blachford*,
Mr. *William Hatrell*,



Mr. *Edward Corwock*,
Mr. *Thomas Smith*,
Mr. *James Nabes*,

*Stewards for this present Year, of the
Annual Feast held by the Worshipful
Company of Goldsmiths, at Gold-
smiths-Hall in Foster-Lane.*

Gentlemen,

TIS with Reluctance, that I suffer
this mean Discourse to go out of
my Hands, when there are so many very
Excellent Sermons Publish'd almost every
Day. But I comply with your Impor-
tunity, because I consider, that you may
per-

perhaps, have a particular Regard to a
Sermon, that was Preach'd at your Re-
quest. I pray God, it may have a good
Effect upon you, and am very heartily

O T

Your

Friend and Servant,

GEORGE DELL.

 PROV. iii. 13, 14, 15.

Happy is the Man, that findeth Wisdom, and the Man, that getteth Understanding.

For the Merchandize of it is better than the Merebandize of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold.

She is more precious than Rubies : And all the Things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her.

THAT only the Wise Man is Rich, and the Virtuous Happy, were Paradoxes to the Heathen World, the Nature of true Felicity being generally mistaken by them ; but the Notions met with Patrons, who maintain'd 'em, even among the Learned Heathens. They ought to be receiv'd by all Christians as allow'd Truths, Truths of which we can't be ignorant but thro' unpardonable Negligence, nor doubtful of without inexcusable Infidelity ; they being plainly and frequently taught in the Holy Scripture, the Design whereof throughout is to make Men Wise and Happy.

The great Disadvantage in recommending Wisdom is the Difficulty of making the Loveliness of it appear to the greater part of Men, who being immers'd in Sensuality cannot discern the Beauties of the Mind, nor apprehend that there is Pleasure beyond the Perception of Sense. To this Disadvantage *Plato* seems to ascribe the cold Reception Vir-

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tue meets with in the World, when he says, *that its Charms would be irresistible, if it could be seen with corporeal Eyes.* Solomon has in some Measure effected this, who has made Wisdom in part as it were Visible, representing it under the Person of a Queen in the finest Dress, and with the most taking Graces, to engage the Senses, and by means of them to win the Affections. The Seat of Wisdom is in the Soul, the invisible part of Man: The Excellency of it, and especially the Happiness arising from it, is not to be known but by those that have it: The greater Degree of Wisdom any one is indu'd with, the greater Happiness is he sensible of, and discovers more of its Excellence. But such Representations as the Wise Man uses, are to the unexperienc'd proper and powerful Incitements to endeavour for the Attainment of Wisdom, which by a very elegant Gradation in the Text he asserts to be beyond Comparison more Valuable than all Earthly Treasures. *Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding. For the Merchandize of it is better than the Merchandize of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold. She is more precious than Rubies: And all the Things thou canst desire, are not to be compar'd unto her. All the Riches, Pleasures, Honours and Glory of this World, consisting in Silver, Gold or Jewels, or procur'd by 'em: All the Earthly Enjoyments we can fancy, are incomparably below the Worth of Wisdom; the Happiness accruing from which is far more exalted, substantial*

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tial and durable, that what they can give. As may be plainly evinc'd from the Consideration of,

I. The Use of these Worldly Goods, and the Enjoyments that may be procur'd by them.

II. Of the Usefulness of Wisdom, and the Felicity to be obtain'd by it.

I. The Use of these Worldly Goods, and the Enjoyments that may be procur'd by 'em. The All-wise God, who has made nothing Vain or Useless, must be suppos'd to have intended these most beautiful and durable parts of the Earth for considerable Purposes. They are a conspicuous part of the visible Creation, whereby the *invisible things of* ^{Rem. 1.} ^{20.} God (*i. e.* the Divine Essence and Attributes) are clearly seen: They manifest the *Eternal Power of the Godhead*, the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of the Deity; so as to leave the Unbelievers and the Disobedient *without Excuse*.

The Royal Preacher manifestly attributes a Usefulness and Value to these Earthly Treasures, and that not mean and despicable, except when compar'd to the greater Treasure, to which too high a Preference cannot be given. 'Twere a strange Encomium upon Wisdom, to say, *'tis better than a Thing, that is nothing, or little Worth*. King Solomon did not trifle, when he made Silver to be as the Stones ^{1 Kings} in Jerusalem, and all his own drinking Vessels of Gold, ^{10.} ^{2 Chron.} and gathered together such abundance of precious Stones. ^{9.} The Splendor and Magnificence of his Court, that

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so amaz'd, and even confounded the Queen of the South, that there was no more Spirit in her, was not an insignificant piece of State. His exceeding Riches above all the Kings of the Earth are related in Scripture as the effect and Reward of the wise and understanding Heart, that he ask'd of God, and which
 1 King. 3. God gave him above all, that were before him, or that should arise after him.

The Lustre and Beauty of these Things makes them suitable Ornaments for the Majesty of Princes, and for great Personages. Wise Men know how to reverence Authority in whatever Appearance; but the greater part are not, nor ever will be wise enough to regard, as they ought, what makes but little Shew: They must be taken by the Senses. The Use of the outward Sense is to let in Objects, that may make Impression upon the Mind: And all Men are capable of being wrought up to a greater awe and Devotion by the Mediation of Sense. Hence it is, that by the special Order and Direction of God himself, the Garments, in which the Jewish High Priest officiated, were made extraordinary Rich and Magnificent; and the Breast-plate worn by him, when
 Exod. 20. he went into the Holy Place, was adorn'd with four Rows of precious Stones. The Tabernacle was beautified with Gold and Silver curiously wrought: And this was done, not by the natural Ingenuity of Artists, directed by human Instruction, and improv'd by
 Exod. 31. Industry, but by Divine Inspiration: Which makes much for the Credit both of the Art, and of the Materials. The gloriously rich and stately Temple
 at

at *Jerusalem* was the most famous Monument of *Solomon's* Wisdom, except his Divine and Immortal Writings. This is a noble Use, to which by the Dictates of Natural Religion, Men have apply'd these shining Utensils; warranted by the Testimony of Scripture; recommended by the Divine Example; follow'd by all pious Christian Princes and States.

Further Riches are said to *answer all things*, as *Eccles. 10.* being instrumental in procuring all external Advantages. They give Strength to the Government and Community, being the Sinews of War, as well as the Blessings of Peace. They enable Men in their private Capacities to defend themselves, and relieve others under Oppression and Want. They purchase Honour, Esteem and Good-Will: They are sometimes, tho' seldomer and more uncertainly, a Means to preserve and recover Health. But *Wine to make glad the Heart of Man, and Oyl to make him a chearful Countenance, and Bread to strengthen Mans Heart; Food and Raiment for Need, and Delight, and all other Enjoyments of the Body, and Conveniencies and Pleasures of Life, that make it run more smooth and easy, are purchas'd by 'em.*

These are Advantages not to be Cinically despis'd. And the Philosopher, who threw his Wealth into the Sea, deserv'd the Laughter, or rather Pity of his Neighbours, for not knowing better how to use 'em, as much as they did his, for setting their Hearts so much upon 'em, and taking such wild and infamous Courses to obtain 'em, and doing
Mis-

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Mischief to themselves with 'em. 'Twas very difficult for the Heathens to avoid Extremes. But our Religion plainly distinguishes Truth from the Errors on either Side. It teaches us, *That every Creature we receive from God is good*; and shews us the proper Use, and just Value of every Good. Tho' it be true, that none but the Virtuous Man is Happy, nor any but the Wise Man Rich in satisfactory Enjoyments, however abounding in outward Plenty; yet it is not true (which the Stoics asserted) that there needs no more than Wisdom or Virtue, to render a Man compleatly Happy. Afflictions are incident to the wisest; but Afflictions are never *joyous for the present, but grievous*. Poverty is always pinching; and yet Virtue and Poverty often dwell together. 'Tis not therefore only because external Goods are in so great esteem, and so much desir'd, that the Scripture makes use of 'em to set forth the Advantages of Religion, but because they have a considerable real Worth, and are justly desirable. Therefore it is, that Solomon compares *Wisdom to Silver and Gold, and Jewels, to a Chain, a Crown, and other Ornaments for the Body*. And our Saviour likens the Kingdom of Heaven to a *Pearl of great Price*. And the Apostles tell us of *Crowns of Joy, and Righteousness, and Life and Glory*. And St. John had the New Jerusalem represented to him in a Vision, as a *City of pure Gold, with Gates of Pearl, and a Jasper Wall, the Foundations of which were garnished with all manner of precious Stones*.

1 Tim. 4.
4.

Rev. 21.

Suerly

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Surely then these are no base and contemptible things, unfit for a Man to endeavour after, or be employ'd about; but they come not near the Price of Wisdom: That's the *Principal Thing*.

Prov. 4. 7.

2. The Usefulness whereof, and the Felicity to be obtain'd by it, are now to be consider'd. I can't but think all Knowledge, that is any way useful, vastly preferable to all the Riches in the World: Because that is an internal Good, an improvement of the better Part. Knowledge is the Food of the Soul, and its most agreeable Entertainment. The Mind is delighted with it, as the Body is with Pleasures, that are suitable to it, the Palate with a grateful Relish, the Ears with pleasant Sounds, and the Eyes with the sight of beauteous Objects. Knowledge improv'd to Wisdom is still more valuable; when we don't suffer our Speculations to lie idle, but prudently apply our right Notions and Apprehensions and Judgments of Things to the several Purposes to which they serve. And yet all this, all that we call Learning, Understanding in Arts and Sciences, Skill and Dexterity in Business, they are all pronounc'd to be Vanity by the Preacher, in respect of that Wisdom, to which he invites us.

What then is the Wisdom he so much applauds? Or where is the Place of Understanding? 'Tis not so far from every one of us, but if we seek it diligently we shall be sure to find it. As it is necessary to the Welfare of all, so has God graciously made it attainable by every one: 'Tis as freely offer'd to the
Poor,

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Poor, as to the Rich: It lies within the reach of the Unlearn'd, as well as the Learned: It suits all Circumstances, every Genius, and every Capacity.

Job 28. *Behold the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to*
 ult. *depart from Evil is Understanding. The Fear of the*
 Prov. 9. *Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom, and the Knowledge*
 10. *of the Holy is Understanding. A good Understanding*
 Pl. 111. *have all they that do his Commandments. The Fear*
 10. *of the Lord is one of the greatest Principles of*
Obedience, and therefore us'd to express the Pra-
ctice of all Religion and Virtue.

The Excellence of Wisdom above all things else that can be desir'd, appears from the Felicity to be obtain'd by it. The Reason of the Commendation is subjoin'd to the Text. *Length of Days is in her Right Hand; and in her left Hand Riches and Honour. Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace. She is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her.* The last of these Benefits is an infallible Fruit of Religion: And it always yields the other, when the Subject is capable of 'em, except when it pleases God to order it otherwise for his own Glory, and the Man's greater Advantage.

Virtue cannot make a weak Constitution strong, but it keeps it from wearing out faster than needs must, being the best Preservative of that Health and Strength, be it more or less, which Nature gives. Infinite numbers of vicious Persons go down to the Grave long before Nature would have decay'd, if it had not been forc'd and broken by the Violence of Surfeit and Debauchery. And tho'
 Piety

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Piety does not exempt her Votaries from the common Calamities incident to Mankind ; yet it does sometimes engage the Divine Protection so, that God gives his Angels such Charge over the Righteous, Ps. 91. that no Evil befalls him, nor any Plague comes nigh his Dwelling, that when the Pestilence walketh in Darkness, and the Destruction wasteth at Noon-Day, a thousand fall at his Side, and ten thousand at his Right Hand, but it cometh not nigh him. On the contrary, though the Wicked are often suffer'd to reach the longest Term of Human Life ; yet Wickedness does sometimes as it were provoke God to an Impatience of delaying his Vengeance, and moves him to cut the Sinner off in the midst of his Days. in this Case, what can Riches do ? They profit not in the Day of Prov. 11. 4. Wrath: They cannot buy off a Judgment, nor will Death be bribed by 'em ; nor can they blunt its Terrors, but generally give 'em a sharper Edge.

A long Life of Poverty and Misery is but a melancholy Prospect. In her left Hand therefore Wisdom presents us with Riches and Honour. Providence will prosper the Handy Work of the Righteous, and give a Blessing to their Endeavours for the good things of Life, unless when greater Honour to God, and Good to his Servants is design'd by their Poverty. Besides, Industry, Temperance and Frugality are the proper Means of thriving in a moderate Measure, according to the Capacity wherein Providence has plac'd a Man, and the Advantages he is under. The Hand of the Diligent is known to make Pro. 11. 4. Rich. Covetousness, Extortion, Fraud and Rapine,

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pine, may be quicker Ways of amassing great Wealth; but Honesty is the best Policy: 'Tis the surer, tho' slower way of thriving: The Substance is more enduring; the Provision for Posterity more secure. Dishonest Arts, if they sometimes hit, they oftner fail of Success. The Man that rises by such Methods, usually shews himself like a Comet, shining with a great Blaze, but soon disappears. I have *seen* (says the Psalmist) *the Wicked in great Power, and spreading himself like a green Bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: Yea I sought him, but he could not be found.* He is remembered longest by an ill Name left behind. Whereas Virtue constantly promotes to Honour; sometimes to Titles; but always to an Honourable Esteem and Character, from the understanding part of Mankind.

Psal. 37.
35, 36.

A long Life Crown'd with Riches and Honour, would not be eligible, if it were loaded with too much Care and Anxiety, with such Labours and Severities, Mortifications and Self-denials, as would render those Advantages useless. 'Tis added therefore, that nothing may be wanting to recommend Religion to us, *Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.* To understand the Truth of which Assertion rightly, it must be remembered, that compleat Felicity is not to be attain'd in this World. This Life at the best is but a mixt State of Good and Evil. *Man is born to Trouble, as the Sparks fly upwards.* By a natural and unavoidable Necessity. The Constitution of Man is such, as will give him frequent Disturbance. The Body will

Job 5. 7.

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II

will feel Indispositions, and the Mind be affected with various Disquietudes. None can rationally expect to live free from all hurtful Accidents from without. And to the most prosperous Condition there's always something wanting. Fruition answers not the Desire : Nor is the Faculty dispos'd for perfect Felicity. But the greatest we can arrive at here is to be had from Religion ; which has the Advantage of a vicious Life with respect to external Goods. Tho' so far there is one *Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*, that the Divine *Love and Hatred cannot ordinarily be known by all, that is before us.* ^{Ecclef. 9¹, 2²} 'Tis notorious, that the Vicious are sometimes rich and flourishing ; and the Virtuous sometimes poor and distressed. Let us then take a transient View of the Condition of each in both these Estates.

'Twere to no Purpose to bestow Possessions without a Licence to enjoy 'em ; nor would this be consistent with the Divine Wisdom and Goodness. God has freely indulg'd us the Use of all the Creatures of Sea and Earth for Need and Delight. Religion abridges us of no rational Satisfaction : But prescribes such Use of the Creature, as can only yield lasting Pleasure. Excess, which is forbidden, turns the Enjoyment into Nauseousness, and by weakening the Body makes it less capable afterwards of that very Pleasure, wherein the *Epicure* places his chiefest Happiness. When Religious Wisdom forbids us to make the Body sick, and the Head craz'd, to spoil the Senses, and destroy our Reason : When it restrains us from employing our Substance to cause

Mischief and Vexation to our Neighbours, and bring Enmity and Danger upon our selves: What does it more than worldly Prudence wou'd do without Consideration of the farther Obligations and Benefits of Religion? Here are the hard Restraints of Virtue, and the pleasant Liberties of Vice.

But let a Man make the best of his Enjoyments by the most prudent Management, without a principle of Piety; he will fall a great deal short of that Satisfaction, which the Religious Man reaps from the same Goods; because his Pleasure will terminate in the Enjoyment of the Things themselves; whereas the other enhances it by the most pleasing Reflections: He receive temporal Goods, not only as his *Portion in this Life*, but as an Earnest of the Divine Favour, and a Pledge of more and greater Blessings to come. When he distributes to the Needy, he has not only the Satisfaction of gratifying his natural Temper; nor the vain Pleasure of gaining an Interest or Reputation; but he believes it to be a firm Insurance of the Blessing of God: Which can't but yield comfortable Hopes, and sweet Repose to the Soul. 'Tis the Fear of God, and the *keeping his Commandments*, which gives a Relish to our Enjoyments, and makes us taste the Bounty of God with a real Pleasure. And therefore 'tis well observ'd by the Preacher, *Eccles. 6. 1, 2.* That this is the Gift of God, not only his Allowance, but a special Grant and Favour to the Righteous; whereas the Wicked having all the outward good Things they can desire, *have not Power to take their Portion* and rejoyce therein, either

either thro' a penurious Spirit, or the Curse of God some way making their Possessions useless. This *Solomon* says is a common *Evil under the Sun*, and he calls it an *Evil* or sore *Disease*.

In a poor and afflicted State the Difference is yet greater. The Virtuous Man can easier bear Poverty; because his Heart is not set upon Riches: He does not rate 'em above their true Value; and therefore less feels the want of 'em. And Virtue makes the Soul brave and masculine to endure the Crosses and Disappointments of Fortune. The Man, that is not indu'd with Wisdom, thinks the want of these Things much greater than indeed it is: For he supposes, that with 'em he might be as happy as he could wish; and therefore cannot but look upon himself as lamentably forlorn and miserable, when he is destitute of a Good so desirable according to his false Estimation. When the Affections are intirely plac'd upon *Things on Earth*, and we can fancy no Content from any but sensual Pleasures, 'tis impossible to be tolerably easie without 'em.

In Sicknes and Dangers without Virtue the Case is still worse. Health and Prosperity, tho' they yield but small Satisfaction to the Vicious, yet they serve to amuse and divert his Thoughts so, that he is not so sensible of the Badness of his Condition. But when a Judgment lights upon him, what has he to break the Force of the Stroke! When Dangers threatens hard; and Pains are present; and Destruction nigh at Hand; what can lessen his Fears, or assuage his Smart, or ease his Grief? A Reflection
upon

upon the Delights he has formerly taken will be far from giving him Comfort. The Remembrance of past Pleasures makes present Calamities more grievous. If he cou'd make his Conscience easie by a thorow settled Disbelief of a future State (which I am confident is not possible) he would be tormented with the Thoughts of losing all the Enjoyments of Life, and passing thro' Pain and Torture into a State of Insensibility. If he stupifies his Conscience; this is no Remedy against the Evils, that are already upon him; but only a means of rendering him not so sensible of those, that are coming; which can't prevent 'em; but makes 'em more inevitable, and fall the heavier, when they do come. And this is certainly a very deplorable Condition. God can too, when ever he pleases direct his Terrors so as to awaken the most harden'd Conscience. And that Mans Condition must needs be extremely wretched, who together with the Pains of his Body has such dismal Terrors upon his Mind. How dreadful is His Case, who in the greatest need of Comfort has his Sins, and Death, and Judgment, and Hell presented to his View at the same time, and apprehends, that he does yet but in a less Degree feel those Torments, that will disquiet him for ever!

On the other Hand a good Man in Affliction has from Wisdom great Supplies of Strength to support his Spirits. The Thoughts of Death, and another Life are his Consolations. He feels his Pains the less; because his Mind is diverted: And what he does feel, is the better born; because he hopes in a little time to feel no more for ever; but to pass thro' this Vale of Misery into a Region of Joy and Happiness. 'Twas wisely said of a learned

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ed Heathen, That he was resolv'd to retain this Hope as long as he liv'd. It gives the greatest Pleasure to be had in this Life, and is the best Support under the Evils of it, especially to a Christian, whose natural Expectations are confirm'd, heighten'd and invigorated by Revelation. There is another Advantage the Religious Man has, which is wholly supernatural, *viz.* Joy and Comfort infused into the Mind by the immediate Operations and Influences of the Spirit of God: Which all are to believe upon the Credit of Scripture, and good Men know by their own Experience. This is a powerful Assistance, that will enable us to undergo whatever it shall please God to lay upon us; with which we may be chearful and content in ev'ry Condition. These are the happy Effects of Religion. Nor is it less pleasant in the Exercise of its Duties.

What is there hard or disagreeable in Loving and Confiding in infinite Goodness, Wisdom, Faithfulness and Power? In obeying the Sovereign of the Universe, to whom it is a great Honour to be related as Sons and Servants. In suing to Him for a supply of our Wants, who is the *Giver of all good things*, and who *giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not*; in returning him Thanks, to whose Munificence we owe all we have? Is it an unpleasant Duty to *Love our Neighbour as our Selves, and to do unto all Men, as we would they should do unto us*? What can be more agreeable and delightful, than to be thus affected and thus employ'd? This is a *reasonable Service*, and therefore by *Solomon* fitly styl'd Wisdom.

The

The only Duties that can be thought very troublesome, are Mortification, and suffering Persecution for God's Sake. Mortification is not a Duty of Religion, but only in a deprav'd State. 'Tis a Necessity brought upon us by Sin. And even this Work is comparatively Pleasant: For by it Reason, which ought to be the Governing Principle, gains the Superiority over our evil Appetites: Which affords Satisfaction enough to make amends for the Pains it costs, be they never so great. 'Tis a Conquest, that requires Labour and Struggle, especially from those whose Lusts are strong; but 'tis a joyful one, when effected. And the Duty will be much easier, after we are accusom'd to it, than we find it at first after a vicious Course. If we give the Reigns to our Lusts, they will create us much more Uneasiness at present, than the Pains of subduing 'em, as well as prove fatal in their Consequences hereafter.

The Suffering for Religion is a special Service, which we may be call'd to, and ought always to be prepar'd for; tho' 'tis a Case, that thro' the Divine Mercy has for many Years been little felt in our Nation. But when God does require any to *Forsake Houses or Lands*, or Friends for his Names Sake; he enriches 'em with the present Consolations of the Spirit; and often rewards 'em either in their own Persons, or their Descendents, with a great encrease of temporal Prosperity; but always with a *exceeding Weight of Glory in the other World*. Can any rational Man, think, that a Consciousness
of

of having provok'd God, who is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell, by denying Him, or any of those Truths, which he requires our open Profession of, will not cause greater Uncasiness, than the sharpest Persecutions boldly undergone, with all those Considerations already mention'd, that qualify the Bitterness of Afflictions? Will not the Love and Fear of God with the Assistances of the Spirit make any Sufferings more tolerable, than the continual Torments of a wounded Conscience. This may be depended upon; that whenever the Practice of Religion is grating, we bring upon our selves a great deal more Vexation and Anguish by declining it. *Godliness has every way the Promise of the Life, that now is,* and is incomparably the greatest Gain. Who-
ever tries it, will find the greatest Content in it, that this Life can afford. 1 Tim. 4. 8. 1 Tim. 6. 6.

But alas! What is this Life? 'Tis as it were but a Span long; and our Age is even as nothing. The next Life is infinitely our greatest Concern; because that is Eternal: And therefore 'tis our future Condition, that makes us considerably happy or miserable. The greatest Commendation of Wisdom is, that *She is a Tree of Life.* This, without any other Consideration sets the Worth of Religion infinitely above all the Riches and Enjoyments of the World. *She is a Tree of Life to all, that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one, that retaineth her.* They that heartily embrace Virtue, and practice it to the end of their Lives, shall thro' all Eternity be free from all kind of Grief and Dissatisfaction, and enjoy the utmost Felicity
D they

they are capable of. Life in Scripture-Phrase expresses Happiness, as Death denotes Misery. And the wise Man alludes to that Tree in Paradise of which, if any one eat, he should *live for ever*.

You see how little worth Silver and Gold, and Rubies, and *all the Things you can desire are*, when compar'd to Wisdom. The Acquisition of Riches is uncertain; the Possession no more to be depended upon; when you have 'em, they often take Wing, and on a sudden are gone beyond Recovery. They many times lie by us uselefs: Sometimes they aggravate Misery. The Pleasures purchased by 'em are of the lowest Degree. All Earthly Enjoyments are but mean, and of short Continuance. Religious Wisdom is a means of acquiring Wealth, and the best means of securing it: 'Tis that which makes our Substance beneficial to us by a prudent Management: And gives us the truest Enjoyment of this World's Goods, and all the Pleasures of the Senses. In Afflictions, or Decay, when we can no longer relish these Things, 'tis our only Comfort. 'Tis a Pleasure suitable to the Mind of Man; that answers Expectation, and satisfies the Desire. Without it all things else are but Vanity; they disappoint our Hopes, and thereby cause Vexation and Regret. Wisdom is the Health of the Soul: It has the Love, and Countenance, and Promise of the Almighty to rest on here; and ere long will fix us in a State of Bliss, to which nothing will be wanting; which we can never lose, never fear to be depriv'd of.

And.

And now what is become of the Glory of those fine Things, that a little before appear'd so bright and glittering? When you look upon 'em alone, they do indeed shew splendid and tempting: But when they are shew'd together with Wisdom, their Beauty vanishes like the shining of a Glow-worm by the Light of the Sun: If they pretend to a Competition, they are to be accounted as the most worthless Trifles. If there be any Man of you not sensible of this, I may justly pronounce that Person far more stupidly and barbarously ignorant, than those rude and unciviliz'd People, who despise your Art, and prefer any sorry Trinkets to *Silver and Gold and Rubies*. I hasten to a Conclusion; but there are two Uses to be made of this Discourse, which must not be quite omitted.

1. Seeing your Business is both Honest and Creditable, you ought to apply your selves to it with Care and Diligence, endeavouring to be well skill'd in it, and industriously to drive it on. This is a necessary point of Religious, as well as Worldly Wisdom. 'Tis St. Paul's Precept, That ye study to do your own Business: Which is a Means of keeping you out of vicious Courses. And 'tis what your Families, your Wives and Children demand of you. And in the Apostle's Charge directed to the *Ephesian* Bishop we have special Order to inculcate and press upon you, particularly the Duty of providing for your Dependents, 1 *Tim.* 5. 7, 8. Which whosoever neglects, is by the Apostle's Sentence to be reputed to have denied the Faith, and to be worse than an

Infidel : For this is a Breach both of natural Religion, and of natural Affection. No Man, that is affected with a due Tenderneſs and Concern for Relations ſo near and dear, will be content with the Proviſion of a bare Subſiſtence, when he may by fair and juſtifiable Ways procure 'em Means of living in better Faſhion, with convenient Neatneſs and Elegance, in a chearful Plenty, and with Ability of being ſerviceable to others.

Chriſtianity extends our Care to all Mankind, as Objects of Charity and Beneficence fall in our Way, within the Compaſs of our Power to oblige. We are not only bound to work for our own Living with an Interdiſtion to *Eat*, if we do not; but when we have
 2 *Thes.* 3. 10. no other way of doing it, to labour with our Hands, that we may have to give to him, that needeth, *Eph.* 4. 18. This is the wiſeſt Uſe we can put our Mony to: For we have naturally the ſweeteſt Enjoyment of this kind of Expence. And 'tis ſo important a Duty, that our Saviour particularly mentions the Performance, or Neglect of it, as a ſpecial Plea, that will be urg'd for, or againſt us at the Day of Judgment:
Mat. 25. He aſſures us, That he will take it as a Kindneſs done, or deny'd to himſelf, and accordingly adjudge us to everlaſting Life, or Punishment. The Deſign of your Meeting is to perform a moſt commendable, becauſe a moſt prudent and beneficial Charity. 'Tis to prevent Miſery, by putting Children into a condition of ſubſiſting honeſtly and comfortably, and it may be of raiſing ſuch Fortunes, as may enable 'em to be very exemplarily ſerviceable to others. By
 this

this Provision the Welfare of the Childrens Souls, the Glory of God, and the Good of the Publick is wisely consulted. Pressing Want exposes to dangerous Temptations; and much more a loose and undisciplin'd way of living; which leads Men into Vices, that dishonour God, and bring great Discredit and Mischief upon a Nation. Exhortations from the Pulpit and the Press seldom reach Persons, that are idly and viciously brought up, and seldomer affect 'em. The Watchfulness and Justice of the Magistrate may by frightful Examples deter some from incurring the higher Penalties of the Law; but cannot reclaim from Wickedness, nor prevent a great deal of Mischief, nor in time the ruin of a People, if good care be not taken to keep Youth from the Corruptions of Idleness, and the Temptations of Poverty. These Considerations among others, that may occur to you, will, I doubt not, prevail with you to contribute liberally at present, according to your Abilities, and to continue this most rational and Christian Method of dispensing your Bounty. These are Arguments, which oblige you to attend carefully upon your Occupation, and diligently to ply your Business. Besides 'twould be commendable in those Men, that have a Genius for it, to endeavour by improving their Art, to advance the Credit of their Nation; which gains a Reputation by having such ingenious Arts in Perfection.

The Obligation to mind your own Calling, if discharg'd, will restrain you from being Busy-bodies in other Peoples Matters, especially in Matters, that are too high for you. This Day, which gave Birth to

our Sovereign, suggests this Caution to us. 'Tis from the Benefit of Her Majesty's Government, that we are all in a Capacity of performing the Offices of our several Places and Stations, to the Advantage of our selves, and the Publick. The Iron Scepter of a Tyrant is a Benefit compar'd to the Miseries of Anarchy. But a good Prince is the greatest Mercy conferr'd upon a Nation. And we have a Monarch, in whom we find ev'ry thing we can desire: Whose Political Wisdom has been render'd terribly successful to our Enemies, happily to our selves, by that, which the Top and Perfection of all Wisdom, the Fear of God, and the keeping his Commandments. The Virtues of our Queen out-shine all the Glories of an imperial Crown. The Riches and Power of united Nations, Nations valiant and populous, in Her Hands; the Conquests of Her Enemies; the Admiration and Applause of Her Allies; the Arbitration of the Affairs of *Europe* are less illustrious Marks of Her Greatness. And then surely it would be monstrous in Her Subjects, who for Conscience-sake owe Submission to Her Authority not to acquiesce in all Her Dispositions for the common Good. To govern is Her Province: To obey without disputing our Duty and Interest. To be pleas'd with such Methods as her Royal Prudence thinks proper to attain the Ends of Government, our Wisdom. 'Twere Senseless, as well as Undutiful in us to determine upon all Occasions, what Measures are best for Her to take, who is the proper Judge, and most concern'd, and best able to know. 'Tis our Business to make this happy Dispensation of Providence beneficial to our selves, by a due return of Thanks and Obedience to God, of Duty and Affection to our Queen; and by an industrious Management of our Employments.

'Tis

'Tis Prudence in every Man to keep within his proper Sphere. To go out of your Way is an hindrance: But you are in great Danger of being lost and confounded, when you wander far out of your Knowledge. Be very cautious therefore in meddling with things that are above you: Be not rash in censuring the superior Wisdom of the Prince, and the Priest, and the Statesman: But comply with St. Paul's Injunction, *Study to be quiet and to do your own Business.* 1 Thes. 4.

2. If the Excellence of Wisdom be so transcending,^{11.} it should have the first Place in our Affections, and the chief Direction of our Actions. We ought to esteem it according to its Worth, and court it with a Passion answerable to its Charms. Every thing the World can offer to tempt us from the Love and Practice of it, is to be refus'd with Contempt and Scorn. The Man, that is influenc'd by Religion will despise those Gains, which are made by base and mean Practices: He has a Soul too great to stoop to the vile Arts of Knavery, Falshood and Tricking, imposing upon Peoples Ignorance or Necessity. The Virtuous Man, as he will use none but creditable Methods to come by 'em, so will he not set his Heart upon Riches, *if they do encrease.* His Reason is of too strong a Sight to be dazled with Heaps of Gold and Silver, so as to make him forget their true Value: Abundance can never stretch his Desires beyond the Bounds of Moderation: Nor will he ever be so sordid, as to ascribe Omnipotence to Stone and Metal, and put his Confidence in that for Preservation, which he knows to be so little able to Save or Help: But will spend it freely, as Occasions require, and according to the Prescriptions of Reason, upon himself and others.

Virtue deserves a mighty Esteem in our Affections;
be-

because 'tis a Good, that may certainly be attain'd; If
 Prov. 2. 4. *we seek her as Silver, and search for her as for hid Treasures,*
 we shall be sure to find her. And if it costs no more
 Trouble to gain this rich Treasure, than is usually requi-
 site to the gathering together a little uncertain, and com-
 paratively unprofitable Pelf; shall we like Children busy
 our selves in catching at painted Bubbles, whilst we neg-
 lect that Substantial Good, upon which we may live hap-
 pily for ever? To be plain, this is to act the most that can
 be imagin'd like Fools, a Title, which the Wise Man li-
 berally bestows upon the Wicked. Earthly Treasure is the
 Object of a moderate Desire; but 'tis beneath the Ambi-
 tion of a Christian; and a too anxious pursuit of it, in-
 consistent with his Duty. Let no Man therefore envy his weal-
 thier Neighbour, or be over solicitous to encrease his own
 Substance. The Man that is now in Rags, if he be en-
 du'd with Christian Graces, shall at the Resurrection shine
 as a Star, and be cloath'd with the brightness of an Angel.
 Let us endeavour with all our Might to excel in the Ac-
 complishments of Wisdom, and to be rich in Virtue and
 good Works. This is a noble Emulation: Here we can't
 vie too eagerly with one another. Whatever their outward
 Prov. 12. 26. *Circumstances be, the Righteous Man is more excellent than*
his Neighbour, who is found deficient in that Respect. I
am, upon a copious and pleasant Subject, which 'tis hard
to leave, but I must detain you no longer, and therefore
conclude with a Collect of our Liturgy. 7 DE 65

*O Almighty God who alone canst order the unruly Wills and Affe-
 ctions of sinful Men, grant unto thy People, that they love the Thing,
 which thou commandest, and desire that, which thou dost promise, that
 so among the sundry, and manifold Changes of the World, our Hearts
 may surely there be fixed, where true Joys are to be found, &c.*

